

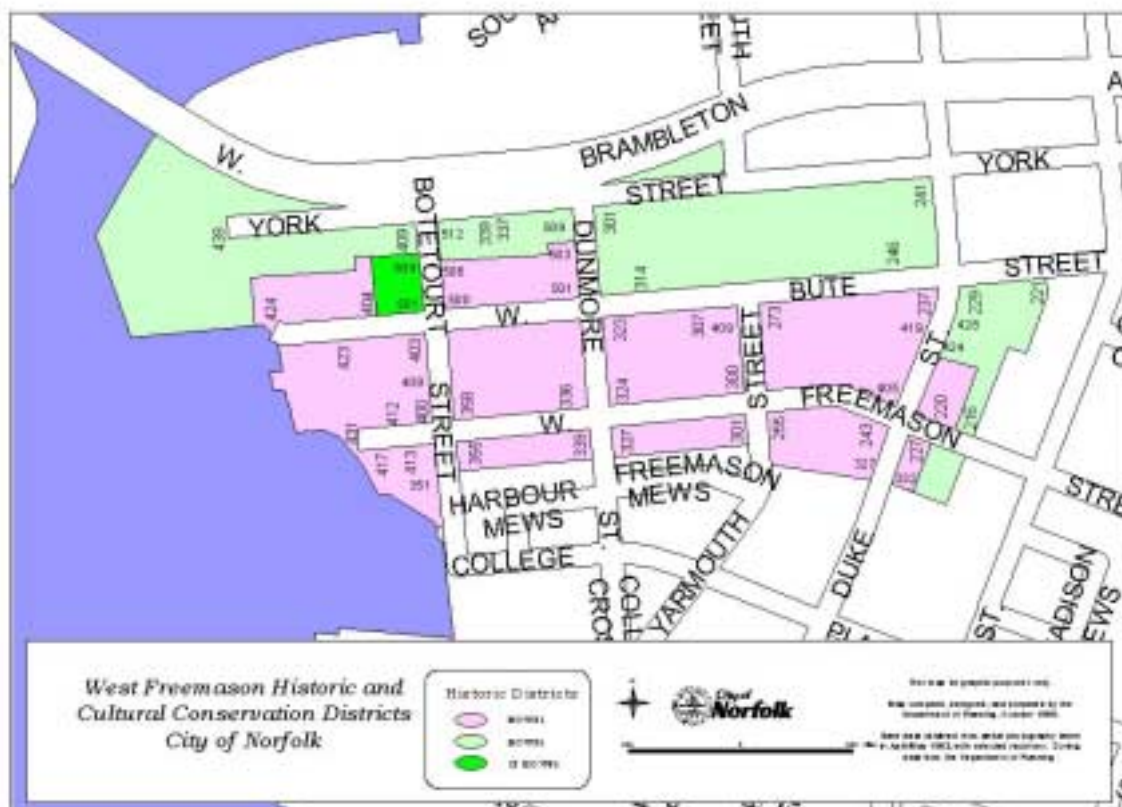
West Freemason Historic and Cultural Conservation District Design Guidelines

Since the creation of the West Freemason Historic District in 1977, progress has been made in the improvement of building materials, preservation practices, and in the understanding of what substantially contributes to the character and integrity of an historic district. Design guidelines should not be stagnant, and should reflect evolving preservation philosophy; the West Freemason guidelines have been revised accordingly.

The Norfolk City Planning Commission and the Norfolk Design Review Committee (which advises the Planning Commission on matters of design) are charged with reviewing all proposed alterations that are visible from the public right-of-way located within the West Freemason Historic and Cultural Conservation District.

The West Freemason Historic and Cultural Conservation District is comprised of two areas — HC-WF1 and HC-WF2 — and there are slightly different objectives in applying the guidelines in each area of the district. The area with HC-WF1 designation is the core of the historic district. There are very few structures in the HC-WF1 that detract from the overall historic character of the area. The area designated HC-WF2 retains less integrity, but a number of buildings with historic significance still stand. The area designated HC-WF2 also acts as an entry and defining edge for the historic district.

The Norfolk City Planning Commission and the Norfolk Design Review Committee use the following guidelines as a basis to review each proposed project located in the West Freemason Historic and Cultural Conservation District. Therefore, the guidelines also serve as a basis upon which property owners and other interested parties should develop plans.



Categories of Review

The Committee and Commission review four major categories of “construction” activity. The guidelines have been developed to address each type of activity, and its special circumstances. Projects will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and judged for their individual merits, as well as the impact of the project on the character of the historic district. The guidelines are designed to stand-alone for small projects, and are divided by “construction” activity, as summarized below.

a) New Buildings and Additions --

The purpose of design guidelines for new buildings and additions is to ensure that new construction respects the existing design and material vocabulary in West Freemason. As always, rehabilitation of historic buildings is favored over new construction; however, there are some circumstances under which new construction is necessary or desirable. These guidelines have been developed to help ensure that new construction promotes the continuity and character of the district.

b) Renovation --

When reviewing proposals for historic properties, the Committee and Commission base their consideration upon the general philosophies espoused in the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, 1995 (<http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/secstan2.htm>¹) which designates four treatment approaches, including preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction.

These guidelines are designed to expound upon the Secretary of Interior's Standards as related to the character and circumstances of the West Freemason neighborhood. Any work on an historic building should culminate in an accurate representation of the buildings historic design, and a design that respects adjacent properties and fits nicely into the streetscape.

Some helpful tips on building restoration and maintenance can be found in the *Preservation Briefs*, which have been put forth by the National Park Service. These short documents each cover a specific topic, (such as Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings, or Historic Window Repair) and can be found on the National Park Service web site at <http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm>.²

As with new construction, renovations should promote compatibility through continuity of cornice height, first floor elevations, floor-to-floor elevations, number of stories, and materials. The most successful renovations modify the existing structure without altering its character defining features.

¹ Available at the Department of Planning, City Hall Building, 810 Union Street, 5th Floor.

² Available at the Department of Planning, City Hall Building, 810 Union Street, 5th Floor.

c) Relocation and Demolition --

Relocation and demolition are generally discouraged in the West Freemason Historic and Cultural Conservation District. Generally, it is preferable to find feasible alternatives to relocation or demolition of historic buildings, and the guidelines promote retention of historic buildings. However, in some cases, property owners may have no alternative other than to relocate or demolish a property. Relocation of an historic building is a good alternative to demolition. Since the setting is an important aspect of a building's integrity, it is critical to look for a new site that will reflect the setting and character of the building's original site. These guidelines are written to help promote relocation efforts that are compatible with the site and building, as well as surrounding neighborhood. Upon receiving an application for demolition, the Norfolk Design Review Committee and City Planning Commission will determine the significance of the structure to be demolished and the extent of public interest that might lie in its preservation.

d) Site Features and Landscape --

Site features and landscape are some of the most easily altered elements in an historic district. It is important to recognize the impact that these features have on defining the character of a district. Historic site features and landscape should be retained, if possible, as they reveal information about the historic character and use of the neighborhood. Furthermore, they protect important information that is part of the archaeological record. If retention is not possible, site features and landscape should be altered in a manner that conforms to the natural growth patterns and configuration of the area.

The West Freemason guidelines are designed to assist in project development for properties located within the area of the attached map. For the purpose of these guidelines, "historic" or "contributing" structures are those built as the original neighborhood developed during the late 18th through early-20th centuries, and which contribute to the overall character and integrity of the neighborhood. "Non-contributing" structures are those built before the HC regulations were adopted in 1977, but either were not constructed during the period of significance, or do not retain historic integrity that contributes to the character of the neighborhood. "Infill" structures are those built after adoption of the HC regulations.

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New Buildings and Additions

Site Development

Recognition of West Freemason's period of significance is critical to the successful incorporation of new construction in the neighborhood. It is important to address the site and building within the context of the surrounding area, even in the design of new construction.



Setbacks reflecting original development patterns should be maintained and promoted.

Site Development Guidelines

- Keep the setback of the proposed building consistent with the setback of nearby contributing buildings.
- Maintain the established pattern of solid/void. This is to include the pattern established with buildings on the block, the pattern and scale relationship of window and door openings, and principal building elevations within individual buildings.
- Orient the building in a manner that is consistent with the surrounding contributing buildings. Any new building should be perpendicular to the street it faces, and should have a primary entrance on the front façade.
- Additions should be obscured from view from the public right-of-way.
- Maintain the density and character of the surrounding landscape pattern.
- Minimize disturbance of the terrain in the historic district to avoid destroying the archaeological record.

Materials

Materials selection for new construction should largely be driven by the characteristics of the surrounding area. Property owners are strongly encouraged to use natural materials, colors, and textures similar to those used on neighboring historic buildings.

Material Selection Guidelines



Appropriate materials selection enhances compatibility.

- Brick is by far the most popular building material in the district. There are some historic wood frame structures remaining, as well. These materials, and other materials used during the historic period of development are appropriate for use in new construction.
- It is inappropriate to use siding such as vertical or diagonal board and batten, vertically or diagonally sawn wood panels, wide lap siding, and other materials not characteristic of the buildings constructed during the period of significance in West Freemason.
- Roofing material should be within the existing vocabulary of roofing on surrounding buildings. In particular, architectural grade shingles, slate, copper, and roofing materials used during the initial development of the district are appropriate. In certain circumstances, other roofing material may be considered at the discretion of the Norfolk Design Review Committee and City Planning Commission, particularly in the HC-WF2 portion of the district.
- Decorative features such as signage, doorknockers, mail slots and boxes, and street numbers should be compatible with their historic counterparts. In the HC-WF1 area, the most appropriate materials for these features are brass, cast iron, and gold leaf or black-painted finishes. In the HC-WF2 area, other materials may be appropriate, and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Norfolk Design Review Committee and City Planning Commission.
- Windows and doors should be made of wood and may have a vinyl or aluminum exterior finish. The windows shall be consistent with nearby historic windows, and shall have full three-dimensional molded fixed muntins located on the exterior of the glass.

Scale

The relative proportion of a building to neighboring buildings, or to its surroundings, should be compatible with the character of the district. In West Freemason, the buildings are relatively proportioned to one another. Another aspect of scale that must be addressed is lot coverage. In the neighborhood, the relationship of buildings to their lots ranges from highly dense full lot coverage to partial lot coverage with urban gardens surrounding. All elements of the building should be designed and maintained to reflect similar elements in nearby historic buildings; as a rule of thumb, new construction should fall within the range that is already established by the historic buildings on the block.

Guidelines of Scale

- When undertaking an addition or new construction, it is important to design the building or addition to respond to the existing scale of development in the immediate and greater surrounding area.
- Design the height of the proposed building to be compatible with the height of nearby historic buildings, not varying more than ten feet from their average height. An addition should not be taller than the principal structure to which it is attached, and new construction should not be taller than the tallest nearby historic structure.
- Design the front façade of a new building to be similar in scale and proportion to nearby contributing buildings. For example if the predominant width/height proportion for facades in the area is one unit wide to two units high, attempt to maintain this proportion in any new building.
- Additions that overwhelm the existing structure, or those that render the building out of scale with surrounding buildings, are inappropriate.

Building Design

The pattern of facades in West Freemason is a defining characteristic of the neighborhood. Pedestrian interest is accomplished through skillful modification of several basic elements that establish a pattern of advancing and receding planes and enhance the transition from the building to the sidewalk to the street.

When designing an infill building or addition, care should be taken to ensure a continuation of the rhythm of advancing and receding planes. In new construction, contemporary adaptations of historic building elements, such as porches, bay and oriel windows, and turrets, can help the new building blend into its already established surroundings. In the HC-WF2 district, this task is made more difficult as it is an entrance into the neighborhood, and designs must simultaneously respond to cues from adjacent properties outside of the neighborhood, as well as reflecting the character of West Freemason. For projects in the HC-WF2 district, proposals for new construction should reflect the transitional nature of the area.

Building Design Guidelines

- Introduce a fenestration pattern, windows and doors that are compatible in proportion, shape, position, location, pattern and size with those of contributing structures in the area.
- Utilize a roof shape that is prominent among contributing structures in the neighborhood, such as mansard, gable, or hip.



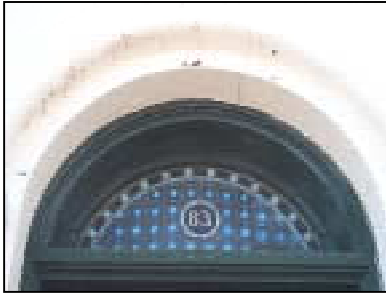
Compatible infill design takes appropriate cues from nearby buildings. In this example, many of the details for the infill building in the middle relate directly to the historic buildings immediately adjacent.

Renovation

Renovation of Contributing Properties

All plans for renovation should be undertaken with the clear understanding that the historic buildings in the district define the unique character of the area, and each building contributes to the collective scene. To that end, building renovations should be undertaken in a manner that will preserve and reuse as much of the historic fabric of the building as possible. Renovations should be designed to bring out the historic characteristics of a building, while making it viable for continued use. Changes in building use do not necessarily require removal of historic architectural details.

Guidelines for Renovation of Contributing Properties



Details such as stained glass and original house numbers add to the character of the district and should be retained.

- Attempts to retain existing features should be made in a rehabilitation project. Details on historic buildings are particularly important features that should be preserved. There are synthetic materials such as epoxy and resin that can be used to recreate details that are unsalvageable or missing; proposed use of such materials will be reviewed on a case by case basis.
- Window replacements should be carefully considered. If the applicant demonstrates that window replacement is necessary, the replacement window shall be made of wood and may have a vinyl or aluminum exterior finish. The new window shall be consistent with the originals, and shall have full three-dimensional molded fixed muntins located on the exterior of the glass. Each window replacement proposal will be reviewed on an individual basis.

Material Selection Guidelines for Renovation



Plate glass windows are not appropriate in the district.

- When undertaking a renovation, replacement materials should be similar in scale, composition, and appearance. A replacement material should only be used if the historic material is unsalvageable or unavailable.
- Appropriate replacement roofing material can include wood or slate shingles, tile, premium grade composition shingles that closely resemble historically used roofing material, and other materials reviewed on an individual basis by the Norfolk Design Review Committee
- Since most properties in the West Freemason Historic District are constructed of brick or wood, these are the most appropriate materials for reuse or replacement of exterior cladding. In some cases, alternative cladding materials were used for the original construction; applicants are encouraged to replace these original materials in renovation, as well.³
- Blocking windows significantly changes the character of a building façade. If it is absolutely necessary to lower an interior ceiling below the window head, some method of preserving the existing window should be found.
- Storm windows should resemble the inner window as much as possible. As most storm windows are one-over-one, they are likely to be consistent with most of the common window types in the area. Storm windows should blend with the color of the building trim and inner window.

³ In very few cases where the applicant **clearly demonstrates a unique maintenance hardship**, existing synthetic materials may be replaced with synthetic materials. A unique maintenance hardship refers to an unusual or peculiar difficulty in achieving compliance with the applicable standards, including cases where the cost of compliance is manifestly disproportionate to the public benefits obtained. The Norfolk Design Review Committee and City Planning Commission will review each application based on its specific circumstances.

Relocation and Demolition

Relocation and Demolition

Neither relocation nor demolition of a property should be taken lightly. Removal of an historic property from its site has a negative impact on the historic integrity of the property, and it significantly detracts from the character and continuity of the historic district. In very few cases, relocation is the only viable alternative to demolition and, in those cases, it is the appropriate treatment. Demolition should only be selected as a last resort for a property that is beyond repair; note that if appropriate maintenance measures are taken, demolition is never necessary.

Relocation Guidelines



- It is appropriate to consider relocation of an historic building if it is the only alternative to demolition.
- In the event that relocation is proposed, the building being moved should be placed on a site that is compatible with the surrounding buildings, situated suitably on the lot, and properly landscaped and incorporated into the neighborhood.
- The building should be similar in materials, craftsmanship, design, scale, and massing to nearby buildings.
- The setting, lot size, and landscape on the new site should be similar to that of the old site.
- Appropriate foundation materials shall be used at the new site. It is preferable to retain historic foundation materials and erect them in the new location but, if this is not feasible, similar new materials may be used at the new site.
- When re-erecting the building in its new location, it is important to make all efforts to save the existing landscape features on the new site.

This kitchen was originally an auxiliary structure to the Grandy House. The kitchen was moved to this location in 1978, and has been renovated.

Demolition Guidelines

- The Design Review Committee and City Planning Commission discourage demolition of historic buildings in historic neighborhoods.
- Deterioration due to deferred maintenance is not an appropriate impetus for a request for demolition.
- In considering the application for demolition, the Design Review Committee and City Planning Commission will take the significance of the structure and public interest in its retention into account. This determination will be based on the extent to which the structure contributes to the architectural and historic character of West Freemason, and the extent to which the structure is a vital and necessary component of the collective scene.
- The Design Review Committee and City Planning Commission shall determine the feasibility of preservation based on the physical condition of the structure; if preservation is found to be physically or economically infeasible, a demolition permit shall proceed upon certification.
- If preservation is found to be feasible, the Committee and Commission will encourage whatever steps are necessary to ensure preservation on site. If on-site preservation is not possible, relocation will be considered.
- Within twelve (12) months of application, a preservation solution (which could include, but is not limited to, sale of the building to a preservation-minded owner) shall be adopted or a demolition permit will be issued.⁴

⁴ Conditions for review of demolition permit requests in historic districts are enumerated in Title 15.2-2306 of the Code of Virginia (<http://leg1.state.va.us>).

Site Features and Landscape

Site Features

Site features such as fences, walls, driveways, walks, pathways, patios, signage, and accessory structures are important components of the West Freemason Historic and Cultural Conservation District. As with any element of the built environment in West Freemason, these features should be thoughtfully incorporated into the landscape. Whenever possible, consistent with adaptive use and rehabilitation, the existing relationship of historic properties to their environment should be maintained. Gardens, yards, and other open space along the street frontage should be retained in original uses.

Site Feature Guidelines - Fences and Walls



Exterior details, such as this railing, define the character of the historic district and should be restored and retained whenever possible.

- Due to the age and density of the development in West Freemason, in some cases, it is appropriate to install low fences or walls in front yards. This would enable property owners to delineate public and private space without detracting from the building's relationship to the sidewalk and street.
- Behind the front façade of the structure, it is sometimes desirable and necessary to erect taller fences or walls. In this situation, the fence must start at least two feet behind the front wall of a building, and must start in a location that does not obscure or detract from the building detailing and fenestration pattern.
- Fences taller than four feet in height must be appropriately landscaped and must provide visual interest through their design. Board on board fencing, or vertical pickets with intertwined vines are two examples of appropriate tall fence types.
- The design, materials, color, scale and proportion of the fences and walls should have a direct relationship to the principal structure. Some appropriate fence materials are wrought iron, brick, stone, and wood slats.
- Fences constructed of materials inconsistent with the character of the district, such as chain link, stockade, vinyl, or "sand dune" fencing, are not appropriate.

Site Feature Guidelines - Driveways and Pathways



Appropriate driveways and pathways blend into the existing environment.

- Driveways are permissible if they extend beyond the front façade of the principal structure, thus allowing a vehicle to be parked behind the building, or between surrounding buildings and recessed a minimum of two feet behind the face of the abutting structure.
- Driveways should be no more than one car wide.
- Driveway paving should be consistent with the historic character of the area.
- Appropriate paving materials include brick pavers, cobblestones, interlocking concrete pavers, granite blocks, or exposed aggregate.
- Concrete is a common paving material, and can be used in certain circumstances. Concrete will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and must match existing surrounding material in color, texture, and jointing.
- Black asphalt paving is not appropriate for driveways and pathways within the district.

Site Feature Guidelines - Signage



Given the nature of the historic district, signs should be appropriately scaled and located to address both vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

- Appropriate sign types in an urban area are the flat wall mounted signs, permanent window signs, permanent banners, and appropriately scaled projecting signs. Signs should represent the primary business name.
- Signs should be placed so that they are visible from automobiles and to pedestrians and should not obscure openings or building details. Signs should not be placed above the sill of the second story windows or fifteen feet from the sidewalk line, whichever is lower.
- The size of individual signs and the total area of signs should be compatible with the building.
- The number of permanent signs per building should be limited to promote clarity and discourage clutter.
- Sign lighting should be subtle and understated, yet visible at night, and in keeping with the character of the building and its surroundings.

Site Feature Guidelines - Accessory Structures



In many cases, accessory structures are necessary to support the function of the main building. Appropriate accessory structures, such as this one, reflect the design of the main building, without detracting from the prominence of the original structure.

- Accessory structures, including storage sheds, mechanical equipment, garages, etc. should be located at the rear of the lot or in a place that is shielded from view from the public right-of-way.
- Accessory structures should match components of the principal structure in color and materials.
- Any accessory structure that cannot be matched to the principal building should be shielded with evergreen plant material or fencing.

Landscape Guidelines

- The most important goal is to extend the mass and continuity of foliage that exists along the street.
- Vegetation should be used for multiple purposes, including as a screening material. In many instances, vegetation is more appropriate than fencing.
- Front yards should be defined with landscape materials that are compatible with surrounding appropriate vegetation in size at maturity, and relate to the architecture.
- To be in keeping with the character of surrounding yards, landscape efforts should result in relatively uncluttered yards shaded by large trees. Landscape projects that involve major disturbance or redesign should be undertaken with the assistance of a qualified competent landscape architect or certified nurseryman.
- Every effort should be made to retain large trees and other mature vegetation.
- Hedges, bushes, or ornamental shrubs should line a building foundation when it is visible from the street. Note that proper drainage is necessary to protect the integrity of the building foundation.
- Off-street parking areas should be obscured from public view with vegetation or screening.